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# MEETING THE RAISIN STANDARDS



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
CONSUMER AND MARKETING SERVICE

# MEETING THE RAISIN STANDARDS



## MARKETING ORDER STANDARDS OF QUALITY AND CONDITION

### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THESE STANDARDS?

To help keep raisins at such a level of quality and wholesomeness that consumers will readily accept them. This, in turn, should create a more stable market and improve the earnings of producers and handlers.

### WHO SETS THESE STANDARDS?

The Raisin Administrative Committee (RAC), which represents producers and handlers, with the approval of the Secretary of Agriculture.

### WHEN AND HOW WERE THESE STANDARDS SET UP?

In 1955 the RAC proposed that the Federal Raisin Marketing Order be amended to include (a) minimum grade and condition standards for natural condition raisins from producers and processed raisins from handlers, and (b) inspection to insure compliance with the standards. After a public hearing, the amendment was approved by the Secretary of Agriculture and by producers in a referendum. It became effective September 1, 1955.

### HOW MANY MINIMUM STANDARDS ARE THERE?

Two—one for *natural condition raisins* and one for *processed raisins*. Raisins failing to meet either are called "off-grade."

### HOW MAY THE STANDARDS BE CHANGED?

By the RAC, with the approval of the Secretary of Agriculture.

### SHOULD THE PRODUCER BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE PROCESSED RAISIN STANDARDS?

Yes, because the minimum standards for processed raisins are more restrictive than for natural condition

raisins. Packers must receive natural condition raisins sufficiently suitable to enable them to pack out standard quality raisins under normal preparation and packing operations.

### COMPARE THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE TWO STANDARDS—NATURAL CONDITION AND PROCESSED.

Both standards require that the raisins must:

- be from sound, wholesome, at least fairly mature grapes;
- be free from active infestation;
- have a normal characteristic color, flavor and odor; and
- not exceed the limits shown in the following table:

QUALITY CHARACTERISTIC	NATURAL CONDITION (INCOMING)*	PROCESSED (OUTGOING)
Moisture content	16% maximum	18% maximum
Uncured berries	5%	none
Mold	5%	4%
Fermentation	none	none
Grit, sand, or silt	trace	trace
Sandburs, Eucalyptus leaves and pads, racks	none	none
pieces of stems	no limit	4 per 96 oz.
cap stems	no limit	35 per 16 oz.
Total damage	10% maximum including not more than—	5% maximum including not more than—
Sunburn	5%	5%
Caramelization	5%	5%
Sugoring	5%	* *
Maturity (B or Better)	45%	55%
Total substandard and undeveloped	substandard undeveloped .12%	3% substandard 2% undeveloped (small size) 1% undeveloped (other sizes)

\* Except for maximum moisture content, the percentages shown are the guidelines used by the Inspection Service in interpreting the requirements of the Marketing Order standards for natural condition raisins and have been approved by the Raisin Administrative Committee.

\*\* Processed (outgoing) raisins may contain a maximum of 15 percent sugoring, in addition to other damage.

## **WHAT ARE SOME SO-CALLED FOOD AND DRUG DEFECTS?**

These defects include insect damage, insect and rodent contamination, feather fragments, mold, rot, fermentation, embedded sand, foreign material, such as sandburs, Eucalyptus leaves and pods, and other objectionable substances.

## **IS THERE A TOLERANCE FOR THESE DEFECTS?**

The Food and Drug Act does not provide tolerances for these defects. However, in administering the Act, the Food and Drug Administration considers the capability of the industry to produce sound, wholesome raisins. The USDA Inspection Service in applying the Marketing Order standards recognizes these same principles and follows guidelines consistent with good manufacturing practices.

## **HOW TO MEET THE STANDARDS**

### **HOW TO PRODUCE "MEETING" RAISINS**

Basically, you should lay only sound grapes, dry and cure properly, discard damaged bunches, practice good farm sanitation, use adequate protection on the farm and fumigate during storage.

### **HOW DO YOU CONTROL "BUNCH ROT?"**

Bunch rot is a fungus infection which ruins grapes and attracts vinegar flies and dried fruit beetles. Fungicides have little value as a control, but a dry sulphur program during the growing season will help substantially. Discarding bunch rot during picking, traying, and boxing will help control vinegar flies which contaminate the raisins and spread fungus.

### **CAN VINEGAR FLIES BE CONTROLLED?**

Vinegar fly population can be greatly reduced by the proper use of insecticides. Contact your Farm Advisor for information on the best kind of insecticide and how to use it.

### **WHY COVER AND FUMIGATE RAISINS AFTER BOXING?**

To prevent raisins from being contaminated by insects and rodents. Proper protection at all times is most important. The longer raisins are held on the farm without proper protection the more likely they are to be contaminated.



### **WHERE CAN PRODUCERS GET INFORMATION ON PRODUCTION AND HANDLING PRACTICES?**

From their Farm Advisors, the RAC, the University of California, the USDA Stored-Products Insects Branch Laboratory in Fresno, and the USDA Inspection Service—all have helpful information available.

## **INSPECTION PROCEDURES**

### **WHAT ARE THE BASIC STEPS IN INSPECTION OF NATURAL CONDITION RAISINS?**

- (1) Check for evidence of live infestation and evidence of rodent contamination.
- (2) Box-by-box inspection to determine if the load obviously meets the standards or if it should be segregated into a "meeting" portion and a "suspect" or "failing" portion.
- (3) Detailed laboratory analyses of samples drawn from "failing" or "suspect" lots that are questionable upon visual box-by-box examination. Such laboratory analyses may include moisture test, breakdown for visual defects, maturity separation and microanalyses for mold, insect contamination, and similar extraneous matter.
- (4) Certification of "meeting" lots to RAC.
- (5) Reports of all "failing" lots. It is the policy of the Inspection Service to show on the report the

specific reasons why the lots failed. A producer may obtain a copy of this report from the handler.

## **WHY ARE "FAILING" BOXES SEGREGATED?**

To eliminate the possibility of such boxes causing the entire load to fail.

## **WHAT HAPPENS TO "FAILING" BOXES?**

These raisins may be returned to the producer for removal of defects or held by the handler for reconditioning.

## **WHAT DOES "ANALYZE SAMPLES" MEAN?**

Using standard laboratory procedures to determine the extent of defects—for example, the boil test for mold or the microscope for vinegar fly eggs. These laboratory tests enable the inspector to determine more accurately the quality of the raisins than would be possible without such tests.

## **WHY WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING THAT CAN'T BE SEEN WITH THE "NAKED EYE?"**

The Marketing Order Standards—as well as the Federal and State pure food laws—require raisins to be clean and wholesome. In order to assure consumers that raisins are wholesome, it is necessary to make sure that raisins do not contain offensive foreign material. "Naked eye" testing will detect large insects and similar objectionable material, but certain types of defects, such as vinegar fly and rodent contamination, cannot be detected with the naked eye. When bunch rot is prevalent—with accompanying *Drosophila* egg and larvae infestation—it is necessary to use the microscope to a greater extent than at other times.

## **ARE ANY CHECKS MADE ON THE INSPECTOR?**

Yes, frequent supervisory checks are made to make sure that the inspector is performing his duties properly.

## **WHAT IF A PRODUCER OR PACKER DISAGREES WITH THE RESULTS OF AN INSPECTION?**

The producer, as well as the packer, is encouraged to immediately contact the inspector's supervisors or an official of the Fresno Inspection office. The producer or the packer has the right to appeal the inspection. The appeal is handled by experienced supervisory inspectors from the Fresno inspection office.

of the Consumer and Marketing Service. The producer may see the results of the detailed analysis after it is completed.

## **DO INSPECTION PROCEDURES CHANGE DURING A SEASON?**

As a rule, no, but there have been a few exceptions when minor corrections were beneficial. No procedural changes will be made without the RAC being informed.

### **USDA INSPECTION SERVICE**

## **WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF THE INSPECTION SERVICE UNDER THE MARKETING ORDER?**

To determine whether raisins meet the minimum quality and condition standards established under the Marketing Order and to perform related services.

## **HOW LONG HAS USDA BEEN INSPECTING RAISINS?**

Packed raisins in sizable volumes since 1938 and natural condition raisins since 1949.

## **HOW ARE INSPECTORS TRAINED?**

By a combination of classroom instruction and on-the-job training. Early in the season, you may see trainee inspectors working on the incoming loads with experienced inspectors, as a part of their "on-the-job" training. About 80 percent of experienced inspectors return each year.

## **ARE INSPECTORS REQUIRED TO KNOW ALL THE MARKETING ORDER PROVISIONS?**

No, only those that pertain to the minimum grade and condition standards and those things that affect these standards—such as storage, sanitation and reconditioning. Questions on other provisions of the order should be directed to the RAC.

## **WHAT IS THE INSPECTION SERVICE ADDRESS?**

**1130 "O" Street, Room 3408  
Fresno, California 93721  
Telephone Number: 485-5000, Ext. 481**

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Consumer and Marketing Service  
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